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Does the Position of the Known Lie Test Influence Polygraph Results?

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Running Head: POSITION OF KNOWN LIE TEST

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Abstract

Polygraph examiners and researchers continue to try to improve polygraph testing in order to increase reliability and validity. During polygraph tests, examinees are asked a set of questions three separate times while their physiological responses are recorded on three charts. The present study tested whether position of Known Lie Test (KLT) affects the accuracy of polygraph test outcomes. A KLT is a procedure which demonstrates the validity of the test to the examinee. An analysis of 653 test found no significant difference between outcomes when placing the KLT before, rather than after, the first chart.

Does Position of Known Lie Test Influence Polygraph Results?

Polygraph testing has received a great deal of media attention due to its controversial use not only in the criminal justice system but also in screening job applicants. Although the Employee Polygraph Protection Act (EPPA) curbed its use for pre-employment interviews in the private sector in 1988 (Ash, Slora, & Britton, 1990), government agencies, including police departments, still test job candidates using the polygraph (Horvath, 1993). There is still considerable doubt about its reliability for aiding in the criminal justice process. Less than half of the states allow its use in court proceedings.

There is a wealth of research regarding polygraph testing (66 studies were read in preparation for this experiment). Research has been completed concerning the most effective type of test format (Bradley, MacLaren, & Black, 1996; Patrick, & Iacono, 1991), physiological responses (Bradley, & Janisse, 1981; Honts, Raskin, & Kircher, 1994), countermeasures which are ways to "beat" the test (Capps, & Ansley, 1992), examiner experience (Elaad, & Kleiner, 1990), and known lie or stimulation tests (Barland, 1978b; Abrams, 1978). In addition, there is research about its use for testing sex offenders and victims (Merrill, 1995; Jayne, 1995), for pre-employment (Ash, Slora, & Britton, 1990; Horvath, 1993), and for testing psychopaths (Krsrich, 1997). The reliability and validity of polygraph tests has been the topic of numerous studies (Olsen, Harris, Capps, & Ansley, 1997; Ansley, 1990; American Polygraph Association, 1997). The lack of a strong, consistent empirical base reinforces the need to evaluate past research and continue study to improve the test.

During a polygraph test, fear of detection arouses the autonomic nervous system and changes physiological responses (respiratory, cardiovascular, and Galvanic skin responses).

These three types of responses are picked up by transducers which convey them to the polygraph instrument where they are recorded and charted separately on paper for evaluation (Fingerhut, 1978). Appendix A is an example of a polygraph chart in which line A is the respiratory response, line B is the Galvanic skin response, and line C is the cardiovascular response.

All the records in this study were completed using two types of question tests: the modified zone comparison (MZC) and the modified general question test (MGQT). With each type, there are usually three charts produced by repeating a set of questions three times. When the MZC is used (Appendix B), there are three relevant questions (5, 7, 10) which are formulated from the facts of the case. There is a sacrifice relevant question that is the first of the questions about the specific type of case. It is the most general question of the series of questions. The examinee is asked if he or she intends to answer each question about the case truthfully. The questions that follow incorporate more details about the case. There are also three comparison questions (4, 6, 9) that deal less with the details from the case and more with the examinee's past with regards to the type of crime in question. There is also a question that is irrelevant to the case, which normally deals with the day, month, or year. This question is different for each of the three charts. The rest of the questions remain the same and are asked in the same order.

The format of the questions for the MGQT (Appendix C) differs slightly from the MZC. There are four relevant questions (3, 5, 8, 9), only two comparison questions (6, 10), and four irrelevant questions (1, 2, 4, 7). The questions as well as their order remain the same for both chart I and chart II. For chart III, the questions are asked in a different order (2, 1, 5, 6, 4, 3, 10, 9, 6, 8, 10).

Each of the relevant questions on both the MZC and the MGQT is given a score (Appendix D), based on a 3-point scale, for each of the three physiological responses. When a response is evaluated as deception indicated (DI), a score of -1 is given. If the response is evaluated as no deception indicated (NDI), it receives a score of +1. If the examiner was unable to draw conclusions from the response, it is given a 0, which is inconclusive. For example, on chart I of Appendix D, the score for relevant question 3 is -1 for respiration, 0 for Galvanic skin response, and -1 for the cardiovascular response. These give a subtotal of -2 for question 3 of chart I. The same procedure is used for the remaining three relevant questions. The same procedure is followed to score charts II and III. The three subtotals (one for each chart) for each question are summed to get the spot total for each of the questions. In the example in Appendix D, the subtotals for question 3, -2, 1, and -3, equal -4, which is entered as the spot total. If an examinee receives a -3 or above on any spot total, the outcome of the test is deception indicated.

Because of the controversy about the validity and reliability of the polygraph, examiners and researchers have been trying to improve the testing process. The rationale for the Known Lie Test (KLT), which has also been called a stimulation test, a numbers test, or a demonstration, is that it gives the examiner an example of the physiological pattern for a lie, therefore making it easier to differentiate deception from other emotional reactions. The KLT is also useful in acquainting the examinee with the polygraph and demonstrating its accuracy (Barland, 1978a). After the KLT, deceptive people doubt their chances of beating the test (Barland, 1978a); therefore, they have a greater anxiety level for the relevant questions (Widup & Barland, 1996). According to Widup and Barland (1996), the KLT reduces the difference between relevant and comparison questions by reassuring truthful examinees that the polygraph is accurate thereby reducing their anxiety for relevant

questions (Barland, 1978a) and increasing it for comparison questions (Widup & Barland, 1996). An increased clarity of the responses will increase the detectability of deception (Abrams, 1978), thereby reducing the number of inconclusive outcomes and decreasing error (Senese, 1976).

The KLT is often conducted using numbers. The examinee chooses a number and writes that number, usually a 4, 5, or 6, very largely in the center of a piece of paper and circles it. The examiner then asks the examinee a series of questions, instructing him or her to purposely lie when asked about the number that was written. For example, suppose the examinee wrote the number 4. In the question series when the examiner asks if he or she wrote the number 4, the examinee should answer "NO". Upon completion of the KLT, the chart is shown to the examinee, and the polygraph examiner explains how easily truthfulness and deception are identified (Hickman, 1978). According to Barland (1978b), even if the examiner does not identify the number chosen by the examinee, the test can still have its desired results. The examinee does not know that the examiner did not get the desired results because the examiner still explains the tests' effectiveness.

Presently, examiners use their own discretion when using the KLT. Some examiners use the KLT on every polygraph test while others simply use it with criminal cases (Barland, 1978a) or not at all. The KLT can be completed before (position 1) the first chart of a polygraph test or between (position 2) the first and second charts (Barland, 1978b); however, some examiners only use the KLT when the first chart indicates that the examination might have an inconclusive outcome (Barland, 1978a).

One should keep in mind that all three charts in a polygraph test are weighted equally when deciding the outcome of a test. If the KLT is completed between the first and second chart, the first chart would not show the effects of the KLT; therefore, the data

might be diluted because the examinee may not believe in the accuracy of the test. When the KLT is completed before the first chart of the test, the examinee can witness the accuracy of the test and respond accordingly. In addition, if the KLT is between the first and second charts, the first chart must be used to adjust the polygraph instrument, which also leads to a less accurate chart. However, if the KLT is conducted before the first chart, the instruments can be adjusted during the KLT without sacrificing the data of the first chart. It is possible that it is easier for the examiner to score charts II and III if the KLT is completed in position 2 because he or she can refer to chart I to see the differences in physiological responses. When the KLT is between the first and second charts, it acts as an interruption of the test because it seems unrelated to the issues of interest to the test. If the KLT is conducted before the first chart, it acquaints the examinee with the test without interrupting the flow of the test.

There are two research issues involving the KLT. One issue is whether or not the KLT improves the accuracy of charts. The other issue concerns how the location of the KLT affects the accuracy of the conclusions. Previous research dealing with the KLT has presented very mixed results. Some studies report that the KLT decreases the accuracy of charts (Ellson, Davis, Saltman, & Burke, 1952 as cited in Widup & Barland, 1996). However, Senese (1976) concluded that inconclusive rates are lower on charts following the KLT while accuracy is higher. It is possible that the KLT aids in the clarification of physiological responses which would allow for easier detection of deception or truthfulness.

The most definitive study on the position of the KLT was done by Widup and Barland (1996) in a military setting. They note that the Department of Defense Polygraph Institute (DoDPI) teaches that when the KLT is used it should be placed between the first

and second chart. Widup and Barland (1996) found no results to refute this strategy; the location of the KLT does not seem to affect the inconclusive rate or the outcome of polygraph tests. The purpose of the present study was to further test the position issue utilizing records completed by a polygraph examiner from the Pennsylvania State Police. It was predicted that the results of polygraph charts would be more accurate when the KLT was located before the first chart.

Method

The polygraph tests that were used for the present study were conducted by Trooper Ken Davis, a polygraph examiner for the Pennsylvania State Police. Most tests were completed on one of three types of polygraph instruments. Between 11-14-94 and 5-12-95, the examiner used a four pen ink Stolting Ultrascript 80547-3137. A four pen thermal Lafayette 761-64GA was used for tests between 5-15-95 and 10-31-97. Since 11-10-97, a computerized Lafayette LX3000 has been used to test the examinees.

The records were divided into two groups. Position 2 included 505 tests completed between 11-14-94 and 9-28-98 in which the KLT was completed between the first and second charts. Position 1 consisted of 139 tests completed between 10-1-98 and 11-10-99 in which the KLT was conducted before the first polygraph chart. For the nine remaining tests, which were completed between 11-17-99 and 12-8-99, the examiner randomly chose whether to complete the KLT in position 1 or 2 before beginning each test. Each of these nine tests were then assigned to position 1 or 2 accordingly.

Characteristics of the examinees are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Information such as age, gender, drug and alcohol use, and educational background was collected from pretest interviews. This demographic information was combined with information about the cases such as the type of case, the position of the KLT, the outcome, and the role of the

examinee (suspect, witness, victim, or accused). The types of cases as a function of the examinee and outcomes of the tests are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Results

Table 6 shows the outcomes of the polygraph examinations between the two positions (1 and 2). No significant difference was found as a function of the position of the KLT (χ^2 (2, N=653)= 1.274, p>.05). Position of the KLT did not seem to affect the outcome of polygraph tests. Table 7 shows the difference between the proportions of decisions (DI and NDI combined) and inconclusives as a function of the position of the KLT. The result was also not statistically significant (χ^2 (2, N=653)= 0.274, p>.05).

Table 8 divides both positions 1 and 2 into 3 chronologically ordered subperiods in order to determine whether experience of the examiner changed the pattern of decisions and inconclusives over time. The 505 records in position 2 were divided into 168 tests (2a) between 11-14-94 and 3-25-96, 168 tests (2b) between 3-25-96 and 6-2-97, and 169 tests (2c) between 6-9-97 and 9-28-98. There were 25 inconclusive outcomes (15%) during the first subperiod (2a), 9 (5%) during the second (2b), and 4 (4%) during the third (2c). The reduction in the proportion of inconclusive results was statistically significant (χ^2 (2, N=505)=20.660, p<.05). Between 10-1-98 and 11-10-99, the KLT was completed in position 1. When position 1 was chronologically divided into 3 subperiods, the reduction of the proportion of inconclusive results was less dramatic and did not reach statistical significance at the 0.05 level (χ^2 (2, N=139)=5.138, p<.077). One unfortunate limitation of the study was that practically all position 2 tests occurred prior to position 1 tests.

A series of tests were done comparing the results of the present study to those of Widup and Barland (1996). The frequencies of outcomes (DI, NDI, and inconclusive) of

both studies (Table 9) were compared to assess if outcome differed as a function of study (present study vs. Widup & Barland, 1996). The results were statistically significant (χ^2 (2, \underline{N} =1135)=43.13, p<.05) at the 0.05 level. It seemed that there was a difference in the proportion of DI, NDI, and inconclusive outcomes between the studies. In Table 10, the number of decisions (DI and NDI combined) and inconclusives were compared to assess if there was a difference between studies. The results were significant (χ^2 (1, \underline{N} =1135)=36.54, p<.05) at the 0.05 level. Widup and Barland's study had significantly more tests with inconclusive outcomes. In Table 11, the ratios of DI and NDI were compared between the studies. The results were statistically significant (χ^2 (1, \underline{N} =996)=51.18, p<.05) at the 0.05 level. Widup and Barland's study had significantly fewer tests with outcomes of no deception indicated.

Discussion

The analysis of 653 polygraph tests found no significant difference between outcomes as a function of position of the KLT. The results were consistent with the findings of Widup and Barland (1996). However, it should be noted that there was a confounding factor in the current research.

With the exception of the final nine records, the data in the current study consisted of polygraph tests which had already been completed during the last five years. At the beginning of that period, the examiner completed the KLT between the first and second chart (position 2). On 10-1-98, the examiner changed his porcedure and began conductiong the KLT before the first chart (position 1). This change produced the opportunity to to compare outcomes when the KLT was in each of the two positions. Unfortunately, it also meant that position of the KLT was confounded with experience of the examiner (and also

with polygraph instrument, since the type of instrument was changed twice during the time that the KLT was in position 2). Therefore, it is important to consider how these confounds might affect the results of the study.

The position 2 tests were completed before the position 1 tests. Since inconclusives decrease with experience, this confound should increase the likelihood of position 1 tests showing fewer inconclusive outcomes. The fact that no significant difference was found between the two positions suggests even more strongly that position 1 is not a better technique than position 2. Position 1 would have the advantage of not only its placement during the polygraph test but also the confound of experience helping to produce statistically significant results.

On the other hand, position 2 tests were completed when the confound of examiner experience would produce more inconclusives. The superiority of position 2 might fail to be recognized because of the greater number of inconclusives due to lack of examiner experience. In order to test this possiblity, the confound between experience of the examiner and position of the KLT must be eliminated by conducting tests in which position of the KLT was randomly assigned. At the time that the present study was completed, only nine tests had been completed using this random assignment procedure.

It is important to note that the results of the present study were obtained over a large number of examinees. Even if examiner experience affected the results, the actual frequencies offer little empirical support for suggesting that the position of the KLT had any practical significance. Widup and Barland (1996) reached a similar conclusion in their study, which differed from the present study in a number of significant ways. The statistical comparisons show that the ratio of DI, NDI, and inconclusive outcomes were significantly different between their study and the present study. Although both were field studies, there

are many other notable differences as well. The number of examiners (one vs. multiple), the setting (central Pennsylvania vs. several places inside and outside the U. S.), and the examinees (civilian vs. military) differed. Such differences greatly increase the likelihood that these results would generalize across a wide range of settings. The lack of significant differences from having the KLT in different positions suggests that attention should now be focused on the more fundemental issue of whether the KLT should be used at all.

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Table 1

Gender of the Examinee As a Function of Position of the KLT

Gender of Examinee

		Male	Female	Total
Position of the	Position 1	104 (72%)	41 (28%)	145 (100%)
KLT	Position 2	350 (69%)	158 (31%)	508 (100%)
	Total	454 (70%)	199 (30%)	653 (100%)

Table 2

Role of the Examinee As a Function of Position of the KLT

Role of the Examinee

		Suspect	Victim	Witness	Accused	Total
Position of	Position 1	116 (80%)	19 (14%)	5 (3%)	5 (3%)	145 (100%)
the KLT	Position 2	408 (80%)	68 (14%)	26 (5%)	6 (1%)	508 (100%)
	Total	524 (80%)	87 (13%)	31 (5%)	11 (2%)	653 (100%)

Table 3

Gender of Examinee As a Function of Role of the Examinee and Position of KLT

Count					
POSITION OF KNOWN			GEND EXAM		
LIE TEST			MALE	FEMALE	Total
POSITION 1	ROLE OF	SUSPECT	86	30	116
	EXAMINEE	VICTIM	8	11	19
		WITNESS	5		5
		ACCUSED	5		5
	Total		104	41	145
POSITION 2	ROLE OF	SUSPECT	314	94	408
	EXAMINEE	VICTIM	13	55	68
		WITNESS	17	9	26
		ACCUSED	6		6
	Total		350	158	508

Table 4

Role of the Examinee As a Function of Type of Case

Count

Count				_		
			ROLE OF	EXAMINEE		
		SUSPECT	VICTIM	WITNESS	ACCUSED	Total
TYPE	CHILD SEX OFFENSE	107	18	2	5	132
OF	SEX OFFENSE	48	30	4	3	85
CASE	CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE	15				15
	THEFT	193	9	2		204
	HOMICIDE	27		6		33
	ARSON	28	12	3		43
	ROBBERY	11	4			15
	SUSPICIOUS DEATH	8		11		19
	BURGLARY	48	3	1	1	53
	ASSAULT	5	3	1		9
	MISSING PERSON	1	3	1		5
	DRUG OFFENSE	5			1	6
	FIREARMS VIOLATION	1				1
	FALSE REPORTS		2			2
	ESCAPE	1				1
	CORRUPTION OF			ľ		1
	MINORS	1				1
	PROPERTY CRIMES	16				16
Ī	HARRASSMENT	9	3		1	13
Total		524	87	31	11	653

Outcome of the Test As a Function of Type of Case

Count

Table 5

Count					
		_ OU	TCOME OF THE	E TEST	
			NO		
		DECEPTION	DECEPTION		
T) (DE	0.111.5.05.7.055.105	INDICATED	INDICATED	INCONCLUSIVE	Total
TYPE	CHILD SEX OFFENSE	72	52	8	132
OF CASE	SEX OFFENSE	52	24	9	85
CASE	CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE	7	7	1	15
	THEFT	104	90	10	204
l	HOMICIDE	11	18	4	33
	ARSON	18	21	4	43
1	ROBBERY	12	2	1	15
	SUSPICIOUS DEATH	3	14	2	19
	BURGLARY	29	22	2	53
	ASSAULT	5	2	2	9
1	MISSING PERSON	4	1		5
l	DRUG OFFENSE	4	2		6
	FIREARMS VIOLATION	1			1
	FALSE REPORTS		2		2
	ESCAPE			1	1
1	CORRUPTION OF	1			1
	MINORS	1	'		'
	PROPERTY CRIMES	8	6	2	16
	HARRASSMENT	8	4	1	13
Total		339	267	47	653

Table 6

Outcome of Polygraph Tests As a Function of Position of the KLT

		DI	NDI	Inconclusive	Total
Position of	Position 1	71 (49%)	65 (45%)	9 (6%)	145 (100%)
the KLT	Position 2	268 (53%)	202 (40%)	38 (7%)	508 (100%)
	Total	339 (52%)	267 (41%)	47 (7%)	653 (100%)

Table 7

Decisions or Inconclusives As a Function of Position of the KLT

	_	DI & NDI	Inconclusive	Total
Position of	Position 1	136 (94%)	9 (6%)	145 (100%)
the KLT	Position 2	470 (93%)	38 (7%)	508 (100%)
	Total	606 (93%)	47 (7%)	653 (100%)

Table 8

Decisions or Inconclusives As a Function of Position of the KLT and Time of Test

Outcome of the Test

			DI & NDI	Inconclusive	Total
		1 a	41 (89%)	5 (11%)	46 (100%)
	Position 1	1 b	47 (100%)		47 (100%)
Position of		1c	43	3	46
the KLT			(93%)	(7%)	(100%)
		Total	131 (94%)	8 (6%)	139 (100%)
	Position 2	2a	143 (85%)	25 (15%)	168 (100%)
	Position 2	2ь	159 (95%)	9 (5%)	168 (100%)
		2c	165 (98%)	2 (4%)	169 (100%)
		Total	467 (92%)	38 (8%)	505 (100%)

Table 9

Outcome of Polygraph Test as a Function of Study

	DI	NDI	Inconclusive	Total
Widup & Barland	305	85	92	482
	(63%)	(18%)	(19%)	(100%)
Present Study	339	267	47	653
	(52%)	(41%)	(7%)	(100%)
Total	644	352	139	1135
	(57%)	(31%)	(12%)	(100%)

Table 10

Decision or Inconclusive as a Function of Study

	DI & NDI	Inconclusive	Total
Widup & Barland	390	92	482
	(81%)	(19%)	(100%)
Present Study	606	47	653
	(93%)	(7%)	(100%)
Total	996	139	1135
	(88%)	(12%)	(100%)

Table 11

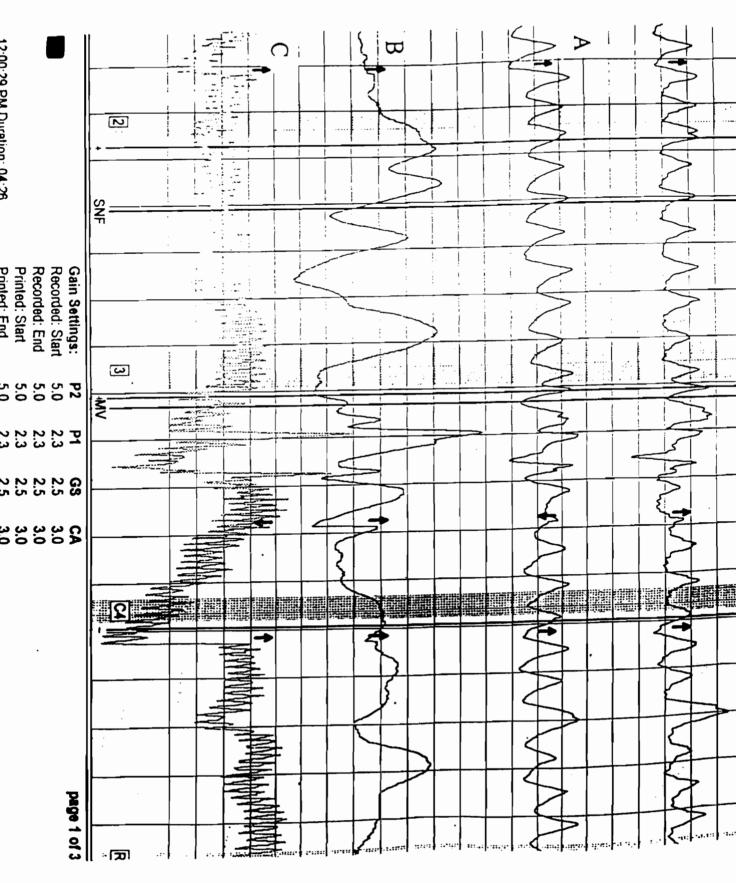
Deception Indicated or No Deception Indicated as a Function of Study

Decision of the Test

	DI	NDI	Total
Widup & Barland	305	85	390
	(78%)	(22%)	(100%)
Present Study	339	267	606
	(56%)	(44%)	(100%)
Total	644	352	996
	(65%)	(35%)	(100%)

Appendix A

Example of a Polygraph Chart



Appendix B

Question List for MGQT

1.	Is today? (Irrelevant)
2.	Is the month? (Irrelevant)
3.	Did you plan with anyone to cash those traveler's checks? (Relevant)
4.	Is the year? (Irrelevant)
5.	Did you steal those traveler's checks? (Relevant)
6.	Have you ever stolen anything that did not belong to you? (Comparison)
7.	Are you now in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania? (Irrelevant)
8.	Are you withholding any information about those traveler's checks? (Relevant)
9.	Did you cash those traveler's checks knowing that they were stolen? (Relevant)
10.	Did you ever steal from your parents? (Comparison)

Chart III (Mixed)

2-1-5-6-4-3-10-9-6-8-10

Appendix C

Question List for MZC

1.	Chart I-Is today? (Irrelevant) Chart II-Is the month? (Irrelevant) Chart III-Is the year ? (Irrelevant)						
	chart III-is the year! (IIIelevant)						
2.	Regarding that, do you intend to answer each question truthfully?						
(Sa	acrifice Relevant)						
3.	(Question that is not recorded by the polygraph instrument)						
4.	While working at, did you ever steal any merchandise, property, or money?						
(C	omparison)						
5.	Did you steal that money? (Relevant)						
6.	Have you ever stolen anything that did not belong to you? (Comparison)						
7.	Did you steal any part of that money? (Relevant)						
8.	(Question that is not recorded by the polygraph instrument)						
9.	While in high school, did you ever shoplift anything of value? (Comparison)						
11.	. Were you present when that money was stolen? (Relevant)						

Appendix D

Numerical Analysis Data Sheet for Polygraph Tests

	PENNSYLV	ANIA STAT	E POLICE		
	NUMERICAL A	ANALYSIS D	ATA SHEET		
CHART I	3	5	8	9	
PNEUMO	-1	0	-1	0	
GALVO	0	1	-1	-1	
CARDIO	-1	-1	-1	0	
SUBTOTAL	-2	0	-3	-1	
CHART II	3	5	8	9	
PNEUMO	0	-1	-1	1	
GALVO	1	1	0	-1	
CARDIO	0	-1	-1	0	
SUBTOTAL	1	-1	-2	0	

Appendix D (continued)

Numerical Analysis Data Sheet for Polygraph Tests

PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE NUMERICAL ANALYSIS DATA SHEET 3 CHART III 5 8 9 **PNEUMO** -1 0 -1 1 GALVO -1 0 1 -1 CARDIO -1 -1 -1 0 SUBTOTAL -3 -1 -1 0 SPOT TOTAL -4 -2 -6 -1 Subject Name: Incident # Examiner: K. Davis Station: Conclusion: DI_____ Date: _____